

FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

PROGRAM This Week in Washington

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CITY

ONE OF THE ABLEST FEDERAL OFFICIALS

BILL DOWNS: "Well, as Washington's week ended, it was clear that at least one high Federal official must be wishing he had broken his arm. He was Richard Helms, who only last month was unanimously confirmed by the Senate with high praise for his public service record to be the new Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. As the nation's top cloak and dagger man, Helms was the epitome of discretion and one of the chief advocates of keeping the CIA out of the newspaper headlines.

"During his long experience working his way up the Administrative ladder of the hush, hush Intelligence Agency, Helms also had learned that the best kept secrets are those which are known to the fewest people. Therefore, it was natural that he would oppose expanding the present Senate watchdog committee, which is supposed to keep an eye on the so-called 'spy palace' at Langley, Virginia, and the CIA's secret budget, which reportedly now has risen to four billion dollars a year.

"Arkansas' Senator William Fulbright, Minnesota's Eugene McCarthy, and others, proposed that the Senate's watchdog committee be expanded to include members of the Foreign Relations Committee. Washington's intelligence community, including the CIA, made no secret of its opposition. After a rare behind closed doors Senate session a couple of weeks ago, these Senators agreed with the CIA position and turned down McCarthy and Fulbright's bid to increase the size of the intelligence overseers committee.

"Most of official Washington concluded that that was that and the issue settled. In fact, the St. Louis Globe-Democrat was delighted that the Senate had rebuffed the doves trying to stick their nose into CIA affairs and said so in an editorial roundly rapping Senator Fulbright's ideological knuckles. Apparently, there was also unbounded joy at the CIA's sprawling headquarters on the Potomac.